

HOW DO WORK VALUES IMPACT WORK ETHIC? MODEL DEVELOPMENT AND PRELIMINARY VALIDATION OF A WORK ETHIC ATTENUATION SCALE

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ABSTRACT

The United States Department of Labor recently reported the number of employees quitting their jobs has reached record proportions. This has motivated organizations to explore the issues presumed to be impacting this turnover, specifically those believed to be the root cause of deflated work enthusiasm. This paper reports the results of two studies designed to provide a deeper understanding of this issue. Study 1 is a qualitative evaluation and theoretical development of the correlation between the attenuation of an employee's work ethic and the unfulfillment of values expected from the work experience. Using a dual dimensional construct based on both the work values and work ethic literature, work related factors that are likely to attenuate each dimension of work ethic were isolated from a study of 22 subjects. A new model of employee reactions to work environment factors that attenuate each of the individual subcomponents of inaugural work ethic is proposed. Study 2 describes the scale development process used to measure the attenuation of work ethic and provides empirical support from 332 subjects for this work ethic attenuation scale. Suggestions for future research and managerial application are offered.

Keywords: *Work Value, Work Ethic, Work Environment, Work Centrality*

1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between employees and employers has grown increasingly more complex and disharmonious in recent decades (Cf. Barley, Bechky, and Milliken, 2017). The most outward sign of the disharmony is the extraordinarily high number of employees currently quitting their jobs. The United States Labor Department reported the number has reached record proportions, and this is exacerbating already significant problems associated with a shortage of workers (Mena, 2022). The deterioration in commitment by workers to their jobs has been attributed to wage disputes, job burnout, and work-life conflicts (Crayne, 2020). However, the vast changes in the nature of work, that is how, where, and when work is done suggests the reasons for the exodus phenomenon may transcend these issues and be considerably more heterogeneous than previously imagined.

Nevertheless, the rapid and mass departure of employees suggests a disconnect between the expectations of workers and managers and this is clearly a compelling domain for further investigation. Organizations may need to institute change initiatives in an attempt to stem the outward flow of employee resources. However, there is a need to conduct scholarly research to determine what the changes are necessary. Thus far, researchers have devoted considerable attention to employee related issues such as career interests, skills and abilities, work values, and work ethic, however significantly less attention has been given to how unfilled work values contribute to the attenuation of work ethic (Cf. Lent and Brown, 2006; Robinson and Betz, 2008).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Work values are sometimes separated into those that are Intrinsic and others that are Extrinsic. Intrinsic values are related to a determined work commitment such as being an exemplary leader, while Extrinsic